



# BORDERLANDS OF IDENTITY: MIGRATION, CULTURAL HYBRIDITY, CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM, AND THE IMPACT OF THE CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL (CAB) IN INDIA, BANGLADESH, AND MYANMAR

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## ABSTRACT

The article examines the tilt between the border literature, migration, cultural hybridity and geopolitics in the context of India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, and elaborates on the paper by highlighting the phenomenon of cross border terrorism; Rohingya crisis and the utility of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in Assam. The focal research problem is to explain why identity, migration and political processes configuration(s) the socio-cultural and geo-political aspects of these border regions. The themes addressed include theoretical frameworks of the study of borders, migration theories, the study of cultural hybridity, and the political implications of citizenship laws. The review methodologically synthesizes qualitative, quantitative studies with a particular focus on literary representations, case studies and policy analyses. A consensus around the function of borders in defining identity and an opposition on the effects of the CAB on the creation of ethnic identity and regional stability are identified as major trends. Second, the review concludes that although migrant and hybridity are more nuanced ways to think about borderlands, future research needs to explore the legacies of CAB, cross border terrorism, and geopolitics of refugee crises.

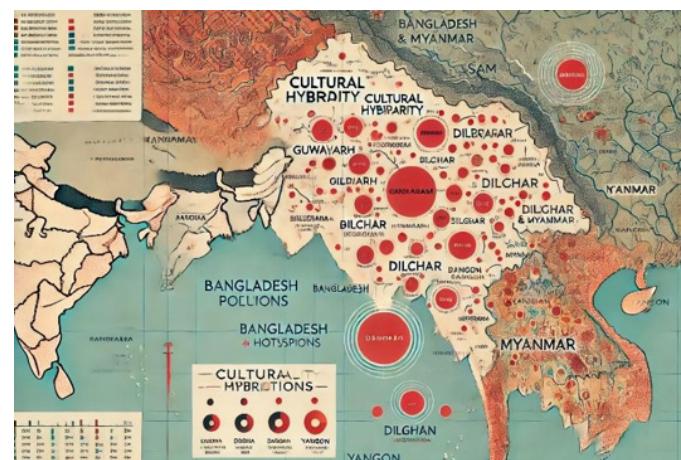
**KEYWORDS:** Border Literature, Migration, Cultural Hybridity, Citizenship Amendment Bill, Cross-Border Terrorism

## 1. INTRODUCTION

From literature to politics, borders have played a long time as a center point, both literally and peripherally but with an emphasis that identifies the physique fractures between nations as well as the semantics sounds the true, the nature, and the community of who we are. Borders appear as sites of conflict, transition, and hybridity in literature, marking places from which individuals and communities have to work out complex nationalities formed around migration, displacement, and political struggle. Whereas political borders draw boundaries of sovereignty, control and access, they also signal what is excluded, in particular for oppressed group. The notion of 'borderlands' has become a central concept of academia and as a unifier, divider, and transformer of cultures and identities, often inventing hybrid cultural manifestations. In India, and particularly in Bangladesh and Myanmar, borders are far more than geographical demarcations: they are zones of intertwining cultural, political and social process.

### Context of geopolitics in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The geopolitical structure of South Asia collapses along the Indo-Bangladesh, Indo-Myanmar border regions and is marred by a legacy of colonial baggage, partition and receding ethnic conflict and religious grain. India and Bangladesh have a long, traumatic history, from partition of British India in 1947, with mass migrations and construction of Bangladesh in 1971 to the more recent struggles around citizenship, identity and refugees.



**Figure 1: Map of Cultural Hybridity and Migration Patterns in Assam and Neighboring Regions**

Across India and Bangladesh, the borders between the countries have always been fluid — there has long been massive migration, mainly of Bengali-speaking Muslims and Hindus, with tensions over identity and resources in border regions such as Assam and West Bengal. Since its diverse ethnic groups have experienced violent conflicts, like the persecution of the Rohingya Muslims, Myanmar once again finds itself in the cross border migration. Because these geopolitics constitute these geopolitical realities, the region is in fact one of intense cultural hybridity, political instability, and security preoccupation, that matters substantially for local and national identities.

### Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in Assam and South Asia

A cornerstone of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)

introduced in India in 2019 has been a deeply polarising and highly contentious issue, especially in Assam and the rest of the Northeast. The bill aims to grant citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan including Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians, who came into India prior to 2014. The Indian government has defended the CAB as a humanitarian measure to protect minorities being persecuted and is fiercely opposed by different sections of the Indian society and particularly in the northeastern state of Assam, as the issue of influx of migrants and dilution of local identity here fuels an already high sense of alienation. By denying Muslims protection under the bill, for many it discriminates, adding to the already fraught divide between migrants and native populations. Plus, the CAB has attracted fears that indigenous communities were being marginalized and that the demographic and political face of the region was being altered. Furthermore, against the background of South Asia as a whole, the CAB imbues politics around citizenship, religion, and migration, and thus provides a sharp and important area of policy from the perspective of China and her western neighbours, especially in Bangladesh and Myanmar. This controversy speaks to the intersections between migration, identity, and geopolitics in a region marked by historical grievances and current problems.

#### Scope and Objectives of the Study

The focus of this study is to examine how these geopolitical tensions have played a crucial role in identity, migration, cultural hybridity in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. In one of the most dynamic and complex regions of South Asia, these countries share a history characterized by colonial legacies, partition, migration and ongoing ethnic and religious conflicts. This study seeks to analyze the historical and contemporary migration flows that cut through these borders, and thus contribute to understanding how those movements come to influence the identities of individuals and communities as well as the broader political and cultural landscapes. This exploration is informed by the concept of cultural hybridity in which difference mixes and complicates in the border where discrete identities come together and move in and out of contact. In this vein, the study will deal with the literary, historical, and political narratives to undergird how the borders are represented and experienced in both literary and political constructions.

The study will also focus on the impacts of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) on migration patterns as well as regional stability. Essentially, the CAB takes the already murky geopolitical relationship between India and its neighbours — particularly Bangladesh — even further by prioritizing citizenship for non Muslim refugees from neighbouring countries. Its implementation has generated major international debates on its influence on both national identity and regional security. This study will look through a critical lens at how the CAB affects the migration dynamics between these countries (especially in Assam) through its political, social and cultural impacts on the migration of Bangladeshis. Furthermore, it will discuss its broader implications within the region, including for South Asian stability writ large (ethnic and religious tensions, political unrest, shifting alignments), and will explore the

role that future economic and capitalist growth will play in enhancing stability. By studying these two issues interlinked, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of them and contribute to the ongoing discourse on citizenship, migration and identity in south Asian context.

#### Research Questions

The central research questions of this study are related to the complex questions of identity, migration, cultural hybridity and the geopolitical binary grid within the region of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The study investigates these dimensions with the aim of a deeper understanding of the socio-political complexity of the region and its representation in literature, policy, public discourse.

One of the first questions is: What can border literature tell us about migration, cultural hybridity and identity in the India-Bangladesh-Myanmar setting? As a genre, border literature has, during the last three decades or so, become a key instrument for exploring the daily lives of people in border regions, where national, ethnic, and cultural identities are sometimes ambiguous and disputed. Border literature in the context of South Asia presents novel viewpoints on how migration across India's, Bangladesh's and Myanmar's porous bordering has shaped and developed identities at an individual and wider scale. Being aware of this question, the aim of the following discussion is to examine how literary representations of both real and imagined borders work as a means of illuminating the ways in which migrants negotiate issues of belonging, cultural assimilation, and the hybrid identities that result from such crossings. The study will analyze how migration and the subsequent cultural exchanges are portrayed in literature and the broader socio political and cultural topographies of the region via works of fiction, poetry and non fiction of the region.

The second research question is: How does cross border terrorism determine the political and cultural identity? The region has remained fraught with cross border terrorism and insurgent groups operating from different sides of the border between India and Myanmar, and Bangladesh. A high proportion of these groups are ethnically, religiously or separatist motivated and have played a significant roll in serving as sources of political instability as well as in forming national security policies in these countries. The question at hand is to investigate how the threat of terrorism, especially on the part of Myanmar border areas and Assam impacts the formation of political identities, national security discourses, and of local cultural identity. How terrorism, and the responses to it, affect community relations across borders will be studied, frequently provoking the ethnic tensions between migrants and indigenous populations on the one hand, and the political decisions and policies of countries such as India on the other.

Lastly, the study seeks to answer the question: How do the migration aftereffects affect the socio-political geography of the Assam, particularly considering the CAB? On the eastern border of India, Assam is a flashpoint of political and cultural conflict because of huge migration from across the border into Bangladesh. Introduced by Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP), the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) grants citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh but it has caused controversy, especially in Assam where fears of demographic changes and the preservation of indigenous identity have led to widespread protest, and where the unrest has reportedly seen local police fired at by stone throwers. The broader socio political consequences of migration in Assam will be explored through this research question, covering the impact of migration on political discourse, public policy and community relations more particularly following in the light of the CAB. The study will also explore the role played by the CAB in polarising local communities, extending ethnic differences and reforcing ideas about citizenship and belonging in Assam and throughout South Asia as a whole. In unpacking the redundant layers of migration, identity, cultural hybridity, and political trespasses of one of the most sensitive and dynamics region of South Asia, these research questions will guide the study. With these questions, the study attempts to bring critical insights to the converging relationships among literature, politics and migration in the India-Bangladesh-Myanmar borderlands.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Border Theory and Border Literature

Border theory is about how borders—both physical and metaphoric—organize and produce human experience, identity and political belonging. Literature is not about geographical lines, it is about boundaries that are sites of contestation of transformation. Border literature looks at these spaces of national and cultural borders that upset and reshape personal and national identities. Theoretically, especially Gloria Anzaldúa, borders are spaces of division and of connection, where identities become hybridized, where self borders and other, inside and outside, bleed into one another. Most of this literature speaks to the experiences of migration, displacement, and the obstacle of where one belongs, a journey of mixing psychological with cultural impact. Border literature in the India, Bangladesh and Myanmar contexts allows for unblinking consideration of the locations of historical, political and cultural tension in the region. Writers from Assam as well as border areas in general often work with the issue of shifting identities in the context of living in borderlands in the middle of divergent cultural pressures and nationalities.

Borders also become spaces of cultural hybridity and power that variously explore and inhabit national and cultural identities. Their work advances the concept of the borderland—as conceived by Anzaldúa and elaborated in more recent scholarship by Homi K. Bhabha—of places where superimposed or colliding cultures, ethnicities, and histories meet. Often these areas will see complex cultural exchanges, which will create hybrid identities, identities neither one nor the other, but rather created out of a blend of various cultural forces. The borderlands in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar are those of conflict and convergence, where local communities engage with multiple cultural influences, work through their assigned place in national structures and often position themselves in the interface of both national and international policy. The tension in these zones, physical and ideological, is fertile ground for

analyzing the interplay of migration, identity formation and cultural adaptation.

### This dissertation is focused on the concept of migration and cultural hybridity.

Migrants in border regions are understood in the context of the concept of cultural hybridity. Cultural Hybridity is the merging of more than one cultural element to produce a brand new, made up identity. It is an idea that bucks against the idea of carved in stone, singular cultural identities and emphasizes instead identity formation that is malleable, in response to migration and cross cultural interaction. In the case of migrants moving from one country to the other through the boundary of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, hybridity is often a strategy of survival and mode of becoming through in a space where not all people are native or authentic. For migrants in these borderlands, they might take up aspects of the host culture and hold parts of their own, forming a hybrid identity of their heritage and their new environment.

It is in turn the theory of migration which helps explain in what pattern and with what motivations people move in across borders. Push-pull theories of migration are theories that argue that it is the socio economic and political factors that push them to migrate (poverty, violence etc) and the pull to a country which is unemployment, violence, familial connections, etc. Because of the political instability, religious persecution, and economic hardship that characterise life in Bangladesh, South Asian migration from Bangladesh to India often involves migration to states such as Assam. In addition ethnic violence and religious discrimination is driving the migrants of the Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar to Bangladesh and India. Material conditions are no longer the main determinants of these migration flows, which are substantially shaped or determined instead by changing conceptions of identity, citizenship and belonging, which can frequently run counter to national and regional policies. Theories of migrant identity formation in migration contexts are centered around migrants' ability to negotiate between multiple identities through the formation of hybrid identities, living in the diaspora and transculturally. Because these experiences happen in the border regions of South Asia, issues of belonging, exclusion and identity formation cannot be understood without considering the political and cultural environments around the bordering communities

### Geopolitics and Citizenship

The issue of citizenship is at the crossroads of questions of migration, identity, and polities, with citizenship having decisive impacts on the pattern of migration and on the lives of migrants. The theory of citizenship considers the legal and political framework through which we determine whom to include or exclude as members of a nation and in relation to whom to bestow the corporation of rights. Citizenship, in fact, has been a highly contentious issue in South Asia, especially in India, with identity, ethnicity, and religion often at bias. Citizenship policies can often affect migration and national identity, and no better example of this exists than the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB). The CAB, launched by the Indian government in 2019, allows religious minorities—Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists,

Jains, Parsis and Christians—to gain Indian citizenship if they have come from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan and faced religious persecution. Muslims are specifically excluded under this provision as a result of which there has been widespread criticism over the provision being discriminatory and is likely to make a change to the demographic balance of parts of Assam.

The impact on migrants and indigenous communities is contextualised by citizenship theory. From one side, the bill represents an effort to resolve religious persecution and to offer those in need shelter. The other hand though raises questions regarding Muslim exclusion from citizenship, impacts on indigenous identities, as well as the politicization of migration issues to the benefit of electoral gain. Scholars of biopolitics and sovereignty have criticized the CAB as an outcome of a broader move in India that reimposes the religious basis of the Indian state on its citizens, potentially rolling back Indian state secularism itself. The second focuses on the geopolitics of migration, another issue that's also been a part of this issue, as the bill is likely to impact the relationships between India and its neighbors like Bangladesh — which considers the bill as a unilateral decision to take migration decisions without taking into account the complexities of crossing the border or regional security.

### **3. HISTORICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE INDIA-BANGLADESH-MYANMAR BORDER**

#### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE BORDER ISSUES**

The colonial and post colonial histories of South Asia are inextricably linked to the history of the borders between India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. The Partition of India in 1947 is an event that is a significant force in understanding the circulation of people and the nation in this region. Since 1947, India and Pakistan split off into India and Pakistan, later followed in 1971 by the emergence of Bangladesh to create new national identities marked by mass displacement and inter and intra ethnic and religious hostility. The partition had a heavy impact from the Bengali speaking Muslim population, that falls between the borders of Pakistan (East) and India. The following years saw migration from East Bengal, (now Bangladesh) continuing into northeastern India, a particularly Assam, for both economic and religious persecution reasons. This migration, however, has often exacerbated tensions between indigenous Assamese people and migrants and spurred identity politics and social unrest in the region.

The creation of Bangladesh in 1971 made the geopolitical situation can no simpler, as millions of refugees from East Pakistan made for India during the war for independence. Bangladesh's creation also introduced a wedge into Indian politics and India's new neighbour, with both has to come to terms with the consequences of mass migration, and the new cross-border movement of people. Porous boundaries have meant that borders between India and Bangladesh have carried on being heavily policed, but with little to prevent migration to continue, and clashes not uncommon over the right to citizenship, identity or resource. In Assam and West Bengal, for India in particular, migration from Bangladesh is seen as

an impingement on the cultural, political, and economic make up of these areas, and many political parties and civil society groups have advocated tighter border controls.

Meanwhile, nearby, though previously known as Burma, Myanmar also faces border issues, especially with that country's ethnic minorities. Long discredited and persecuted, the Rohingya Muslim population in Myanmar, living mainly in the western state of Rakhine have long faced discrimination and acts of violence by Burmese government. Things worsened badly in 2017 when a military crackdown against the Rohingya was carried out, and hundreds of thousands of refugees fled across the border into neighbouring Bangladesh. This has led to big refugee crisis, and has added more strain to the existing Myanmar–Bangladesh relations, as many Rohingya refugees have sought settlement in India's northeastern states. The forced displacement of Rohingya Muslims has resulted in a humanitarian crisis around the region, which has shaped the geopolitical landscape in the region, providing additional fuel for tension between countries and migration, statelessness and that of identity.

#### **Geopolitics and Cross Border Terrorism**

Due to the already tense geopolitical relations between India and her neighbours, especially India and Bangladesh, the issue of cross border terrorism has been an ongoing headache so far in the India Bangladesh Myanmar borderlands. Both the security policies of the respective nations and the live of local populations have been shaped by various insurgent and militant groups operating in these border areas. Insurgency in Assam and other northeastern Indian states, which is compounded by ethnic, religious and political grievances and sustained by cross border support from insurgent groups based in Bangladesh and Myanmar, has further advanced in India. Operating across the porous India-Bangladesh border, refuges in Bangladesh, groups such as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) have long been known. Ethno-nationalist insurgencies then in Myanmar, such as those of the Kachin and Karen rebel groups, have tended to have taken refuge in India and Bangladesh, and that has destabilized the region further.

While Bangladesh is an ally in fighting terrorism with India, it has its own problem with outlawed groups beyond its borders armed by external powers. The porous borders have also been used by some Islamist militant groups including the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and cross-border smuggling, arms trafficking remain major concerns. But the Rohingya refugee crisis has complicated the situation further as some extremist groups allegedly tried to radicalize the Rohingya who took refuge in Bangladesh, raising concern of the spread of terrorist ideology on the Indian border.

Starting long ago in Myanmar, the Rakhine state has seen a military crackdown against the Rohingya Muslims which has led to Rohingya insurgent groups such as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) launching attacks on the Myanmar military and have had an ongoing insurgency inside the state. Sometimes, the conflict of Myanmar against ethnic insurgents from northeastern states, including Kachin Independence Army

(KIA), the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) spurs to occasional border skirmishes between India and Myanmar. They have played their part in the area of instability, and have required the higher levels of border security by all three countries.

Cross border terrorism has not remained peripheral in shaping geopolitics. This not only influences national security strategies of these countries, but also does impact the diplomatic relations between each one. Periodic military actions and calls for tougher controls on India's borders with insurgent groups in Bangladesh and Myanmar have been its responses to cross-border terrorism. Meanwhile Bangladesh has had to confront both the problem of countering internal extremism and the aftermath of international terrorism spilling across its borders. Conversely, Myanmar's military government has been deeply criticised by others worldwide, over its treatment of the Rohingya which has only served to inflame regional tensions and instability.

Year	Incident	Location	Involved Parties	Political/Geo-political Consequences
1992	ULFA Insurgency	Assam, India	United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), Bangladesh-based militants	Increased border security between India and Bangladesh, strained diplomatic relations
2001	Attack on Indian Parliament	New Delhi, India	Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Taiba (Pakistan-based)	Led to a military standoff between India and Pakistan, affected relations with Bangladesh and Myanmar
2008	Mumbai Terror Attacks	Mumbai, India	Lashkar-e-Taiba (Pakistan-based)	Heightened regional security concerns, particularly regarding Bangladesh's role in harboring extremists
2017	Rohingya Refugee Crisis	Rakhine State, Myanmar & Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	Myanmar Army, Rohingya militants (ARSA)	Large-scale displacement to Bangladesh, escalated regional security concerns, diplomatic tensions between Myanmar, Bangladesh, and India

2020	Myanmar Military Clashes	India-Myanmar Border	Myanmar Military, Ethnic Insurgents	Impact on India-Myanmar border security, heightened regional tensions and refugee issues
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**Table 1: Major Cross-Border Terrorism Incidents and Their Impact on the Region**

These continue to be the products of a history marked by complex and often violent cross border terrorism in the region that obliges India, Bangladesh and Myanmar to deepen cooperation and security measures. These conflicts have proven persistently intractable, and at immense social and human cost of displacement and loss of life they have enduring implications for national security, regional cooperation and international diplomacy.

#### 4. The Rohingya Crisis: Geopolitical implications and Migration Rohingya Muslim Plight

But for decades the Rohingya Muslim population have suffered severe persecution in Myanmar, with events worsening sharply in the last few years. Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim minority in Myanmar mainly living in the mainly Buddhist Rakhine state, which has denied citizenship to them and sees them as one of the country's officially stateless groups. The roots of the conflict—tensions between the Rohingya and the Buddhist majority population—predate Myanmar's postcolonial history and are linked to colonial policies. In Myanmar, successive governments refused to grant the Rohingya citizenship after independence in 1948, saying they were illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh. Under Myanmar's military junta in tension equation, Rohingya were considered a threat to national unity.

But the situation came to a head in 2017, when the Myanmar military undertook a vicious crackdown on the Rohingya, accusing them of becoming 'insurgents' and saying they attacked police posts in Rakhine. As a result of 'clearance operations', such as mass killings, rape and the burning to the ground of villages, widespread violence broke out. Therefore, some 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh as refugees. The exodus, which drew on the humanity of millions of Myanmarens, resulted in one of the world's most pressing refugee crises and a loud international outcry over Myanmar's human rights violations. Myanmar government and military have defied [international calls for action to stop atrocities against the Rohingya] and accused them of ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses.

India and Bangladesh have been quite different in their response to hosting Rohingya refugees in the face of this crisis. But the first host country in Bangladesh, which shares a long border with Myanmar and has historically had close cultural ties with the Rohingya, became the overwhelming destination. Today, almost one million refugees from across the world are overcrowded in the Cox's Bazar region in Bangladesh, making it one of the largest refugee settlements in the world. The influx

has put strong strain on Bangladesh's resources, infrastructure and economy while it has offered sanctuary to the Rohingya.

Instead, India has been more contentious. Although India has a sizeable Rohingya population, with many in Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Hyderabad, it has refused to accept refugee calls. The Indian government has said it is worried that radicalisation could spread to refugees, and the BJP ruling government has even called on Rohingya people an 'illegal population'. India goes at least as far as to refuse to recognize them as refugees while also implementing its Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which has been criticized for extending citizenship to non-Muslim refugees, but excluding Muslim minorities such as the Rohingya. India has been an exclusionary point, between India and its neighboring countries, mostly Bangladesh, which has deemed India's position as discriminatory.

But the Rohingya crisis also has big geopolitical overtones in South Asia. Bad relations with both Bangladesh and India, suffering because of the refugee situation, are making Myanmar's relationship strained while India's unwillingness to house the refugees is raising questions on the role of India on the regional stability. Yet the military regime's violent crackdown on rebel ethnic minorities has isolated it from a number of international powers, including the United States and the European Union, which have imposed sanctions. But Myanmar increasingly has looked to Asia's largest countries - China and Russia - for help, complicating the geopolitics of the region. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) expanded to Myanmar, tying, indeed, Myanmar to Beijing while distancing it from Western countries. The crisis has thus added importance to strategic potential of Myanmar in the broader framework of South East Asia's geopolitics and can impact on India's security and diplomatic strategy in the region.

#### **Humanitarian and Security Challenges.**

Both India and Bangladesh face great humanitarian, social, economic and political challenges arising from the Rohingya refugee crisis.

The influx of refugees to Bangladesh's already limited resources scales in epic proportions. The Cox's Bazar region, with already one of the planet's most densely inhabited lands, is overstretched to house more than 1 million refugees, leading to all but intolerable pressure on its local infrastructure, housing and sanitation, education and health care systems. The financial squeeze has also been big despite Bangladesh's being praised as one of the most generous hosts in the world for the Rohingya. Further, the many (i.e. stateless) long term residence of such a large refugee population has raised fears not only for social tension and between the refugees and the host population, but also for the concerns of radicalisation of some sectors of the refugee population, that may spill over into extremist violence.

But for India, Rohingya crisis has both humanitarian and security challenges. India considers refugee issue as national security concern in the Northeast states like Assam because it believes the influx of refugees can have deleterious effect on the local social and resource basis and identity. The refusal is because

India is wary of a flood of illegal migrant inflows that might alter the demographic composition in sensitive border areas, a gateway for supplies crossing the awesomely long border shared with Myanmar, and fears of Islamist radicalization among the refugees. India's treatment of refugees, a product of its larger concerns regarding terrorism and cross border militancy in the wake of the insurgent movements in the Northeast and the greater geopolitical concerns of stability on the part of India are also of relevance.

From a geopolitical standpoint both India and Bangladesh are pressured by international organizations and the human rights groups to reach a permanent solution for Rohingya crisis. Particularly Bangladesh has demanded international action and pressure on Myanmar to ensure safe and dignified return of Rohingya to Myanmar. Meanwhile India has been criticised on its stand on the refugee issue with human rights organisation and other regional stakeholders demanding that India takes a more humane approach to the refugee issue. It is also a diplomatic challenge to Bangladesh, where India's hands-off stance on the suffering of the Rohingya is being seen as indifferent.

Year	Bangladesh Refugees	India Refugees	Myanmar Population	Political Impact	Humanitarian Challenges
2010	~30,000	~20,000	1.5 million	Limited international recognition; early stages of exodus	Early-stage humanitarian assistance required
2015	~50,000	~30,000	1.1 million	Increased border security in Bangladesh, concerns in India	Growing refugee numbers; early infrastructure stress
2017	700,000+	~40,000	1.0 million	Myanmar military crackdown; Bangladesh's strain Intensifies	Largest refugee crisis; overcrowded camps in Bangladesh
2019	1 million	~40,000	0.7 million	Global pressure on Myanmar to repatriate; India's non-cooperation stance	Continued strain on resources in Bangladesh
2021	1 million+	~20,000	0.7 million	Bangladesh calls for international support	Long-term refugee management; economic challenges

2024	1 mil-million+	~20,000	0.7 mil-million	Myanmar's international isolation continues	Continued instability in refugee camps
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**Table 2: Comparative Overview of Rohingya Refugee Populations in Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar (2010-2024)**

This table shows the dramatic growth in Rohingya refugee population in Bangladesh and the relative average of the refugee population in India, and the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya people in Myanmar. It remains open ended as Bangladesh bears the brunt of the crisis while India and Myanmar come under greater international scrutiny for their handling.

### 5. THE CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL (CAB): IMPACT AND AFTEREFFECTS OVERVIEW OF THE CAB

The Indian Parliament cleared the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in December 2019, which serves as India's new policy on which some classes of non-Muslim minorities from neighboring countries will be granted citizenship. The bill sought to give citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who were fleeing religious persecution. The intent was that this legislation would resolve the grievances of minority communities in these Islamic majority countries, and indeed especially those communities who had been discriminated against because of their religious beliefs.

The background of the CAB occurs the aftermath of India's partition in 1947 which created the religious differentiation among India and Pakistan. But, with a view to give refuge to those who, during the partition and subsequent religious violence of the subcontinent, had been driven into exile, the bill was seen as a corrective measure. That was however controversial as it appears to exclude Muslims from such provisions, a move that was criticized for religious discrimination. The critics say the CAB feeds off the religious divisions and the consequent divisions seen in South Asia's geopolitical relations and it undermines the constitutional framework of secularism given to Indian people.

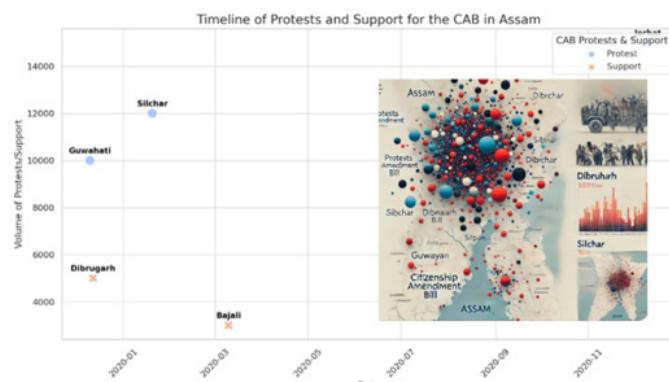
The contentious relationship between CAB and the migration patterns from both Bangladesh and Myanmar discloses a lot of problems. The bill's provisions relate directly to the huge migration of Hindu refugees from Bangladesh that have entered India over the decades. The Hindu majority status of the bill, by virtue of it being important for states of Assam, home of hundreds of thousands Bangladeshis, and West Bengal, other parts of which host camps of Bangladeshis, is all the more pertinent. Myanmar bill seen by some as targeting religious minorities including the Chin and Rohingya Muslims who have fled persecution. Rohingya Muslims excluded from the CAB have nonetheless helped make the issue of citizenship, migration and religion a matter of regional conversation.

### CAB Implications on Political and Social Aspect of Assam

In Assam in particular, the impact of the CAB has been particularly tough as the state is a point of reference for migration related tensions for decades now. The CAB, of course, is viewed by Assamese population as direct challenge to their ethnic cultural and demographic status. For a long history, Assam has witnessed migration from Bangladesh, and the infusion of Hindu refugees from Bangladesh through CAIB has also generated fears of demographic change. For Assam long war to survive (Assamese identity movement) as well as Bodo movement to survive against number on external migrants and keeping them in their desired peripheral villages. Given this, giving citizenship to religious minorities under the CAB is seen in Assam as an eroding of local identity and a menace to the region's cultural heritage.

The socio-political implications of the CAB are no trivial matter in Assam, however. It is felt that the law might further worsen ethnic polarisation between host Assamese indigenous population and immigrant communities, both Hindu and Muslims. They argue that the law is discriminatory, granting special treatment to people because of their religion, and has stirred fears that it could marginalize Muslims, who have long been a major group in Assam. CAB, which will grant citizenship to Hindus with shortage of documents but won't let the stateless Muslims, close to the state's National Register of Citizens (NRC) process, an effort to remove illegal migrants, which brought them to the point of statelessness.

Ever since the bill was passed, ethnic and political resistance to the CAB has been widespread in Assam and protests have broken out. Leading the protests are various indigenous Assamese organisations, including All Assam Students' Union (AASU), who also backed the CAB repeal and sought that the interests of Assam's indigenous communities should be given priority by the government. But the protests have frequently turned violent and the state has witnessed major clashes between demonstrators and law enforcement. Fear of cultural and demographic dilution seems to be driving these protests which are part of the broader — and fragmented — resistance to the CAB by Assam, and other northeastern states' political and social groups.



**Figure 2: Protests and Support for the CAB in Assam (with timeline and geographic hotspots)**

Date	Event/Action	Location	Support/Opposition	Political Consequences
Dec	Passage of CAB in Parliament	Nationwide	Strong opposition	Widespread protests in Assam and Northeast India
Jan 2020	Protests against CAB begin	Guwahati, Assam	Opposed by AASU, local groups	Escalation of violence, clashes with police
Feb 2020	Police crackdown on protesters	Variou-sAssam districts	Strong opposition	Arrests and deaths, ongoing unrest
Mar 2020	Government's response to protestors	Guwahati and Dimapur	Support from Hindu organizations	Increased political divisions, Assam's Assembly divided
Jul 2020	Legal challenge to CAB in Supreme Court	Nationwide	Strong opposition	Legal battles over constitutionality of the CAB
Dec 2020	Continued protests And demands for repeal	Assam and Tripura	Ongoing opposition	Protests led by youth organizations and political parties

**Figure 2: Protests and Support for the CAB in Assam (with timeline and geographic hotspots)**

In Figure 2, the protests in Assam highlight its great geographic spread of opposition to the CAB, largely concentrated in Assam and other northeastern states. The issue has become a fight over indigenous Assamese identity, and many fear that giving citizenship to Hindu refugees from Bangladesh risks changing the demographics of the area over the long term.

### CAB and Its Regional Impact

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) has had far reaching geopolitical implications for India's own role in Bangladesh as well as Myanmar. The chief of the Hindu refugee people in Bangladesh doubt the bill because it holds them accountable personally, in connection to the migration to India. But the Bangladeshi government has expressed concerns that the CAB would have a negative impact on the Hindu minority population within its border, leaving Indian laws open to ring in Hindu migrants arriving from Bangladesh, skipping the usual refugee routes. Besides, repeatedly, Bangladesh has asserted that the Rohingya refugee problem should be dealt with compassionately, while the CAB shifted the equilibrium to India's domestic issues, creating a more subtle bilateral relationship.

The focus of the bill on religious minorities — a Muslim and non-Muslim minorities such as the Rohingya that suffer persecution in the military controlled state — could be seen as a barely coded capitulation to persecution of minorities in Myanmar. But Myanmar's government, facing its own crises over the Rohingya and other ethnic insurgencies, has largely ignored the CAB, which passed although it was defeated in parliament. Half of that stance is an unwillingness — and the other half denial of responsibility — regarding international demands for justice on the Rohingya crisis. This then makes the CAB provisions put India and Myanmar on the contrary sides of the growing geopolitical chasm in the region between the two countries which are enmeshed in the larger web of regional politics involving religion and nationalism.

Country	Government Response	Media Coverage	Public Opinion
Bangladesh	Official condemnation of CAB, concerns about Hindu migration	Critical, focuses on the exclusion of Muslims	General concern over demographic shifts, possible instability
Myanmar	Indifferent, focus on internal issues	Neutral, with occasional criticism from pro-democracy groups	Limited public awareness, but some concern over regional implications

**Table 3: Political Reactions to CAB in Bangladesh and Myanmar (government responses, media coverage, public opinion)**

The relations of Bangladesh and Myanmar to the CAB are brought out in the table. The government in Bangladesh has been worried that migration to India could disrupt the fragile demographic balance, already tense. Myanmar's political establishment has instead steered clear of international worries, choosing to concentrate on domestic matters and ethnic clashes: the case of the Rohingya.

### 6. Migration and Identity in the Context of Cross Border Terrorism Cross border terrorism and migration.

Migration patterns across the borders of India - Bangladesh - Myanmar have been significantly complicated by cross border terrorism and insurgency in the Assam, West Bengal region of India and the Northeast of India in particular. Often, conditions created by terrorist activities or armed insurgencies require people to flee their homes, dramatically increasing numbers and result in a forced migration of local populations across borders. Violence and unrest is often fuelled by insurgent groups operating from other countries, mainly from Bangladesh and Myanmar, which in turn push civilians from one country into the other. Large areas of Assam are affected by insurgents particularly from the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) who have been crossing over to India from Bangladesh.

Driving the conflict are the decades long struggle between the Rohingya Muslims and military junta in Myanmar and forced displacement of large numbers of ethnic minorities in

neighboring Bangladesh and India. Migratory flows intertwine with these terrorist activities and political violence, populations affected by violence and persecution are legally entering Europe seeking refuge. And cross border terrorism only worsens the humanitarian crisis along with making the populace more insecure among the locals, which results in the social and cultural shifts as the communities being more heterogeneous because of the influx of refugees and migrants.

Terrorism and insurgency also muddle the identity formation both amongst the migrants and the host communities. Despite its various tensions, identity, ethnicity and religion and in spite of its migrants' often, strong adherence to their original cultural practices, integration may prove difficult. Compared to situations of forced migration, violence and displacement can lead to migrants narrating themselves in ways that buttress a diasporic identity based in resistance and survival.

### Case Study

#### *Assam, an Analysis of Cross Border Terrorism*

The insurgency in Assam, especially in the 1980s, has always had a great relationship with migration and the shifting definitions of an Assamese person. It was mostly concerns over the influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh that drove armed insurgent groups like ULFA, National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA) to armed struggle with support from Bangladesh and Myanmar. The first groups to observe these demographic changes viewed them as a threat to the Assamese identity because migrants, especially Hindus from Bangladesh who had fled religious persecution, were seen as diluting the identity. Therefore, the armed insurgency was considered as both a reaction to political and economic marginalization, and a reaction to the suspected threat of foreign infiltration.

Terrorism and insurgency have only exacerbated these identity struggles, driving people to flee. Because of the violence that has displaced civilians over the years, refugee camps and migrant settlements followed, some of which are still seen as hotbeds to political unrest. Fears of a demographic change have fueled ethnic and cultural tensions on the rise in Assam as ethnic minorities have migrated into the state. These fears that were used by the insurgent groups to justify their armed struggle, and to portray their fight as a fight for the survival of Assamese culture against the ever increasing migrant population.

As with the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), Assam's identity struggles generated through cross border terrorism define local politics, social relations and national policy debates. But many in Assam read the bill's provisions on granting citizenship to Hindu refugees from Bangladesh as a response to cross-border terrorism and the resolution to the problem of illegal migration: a legacy of terrorism and insurgency. They have meanwhile fanned widespread protests and resistance from indigenous groups that fear the CAB will further compound the demographic and cultural tensions in the region.

Year	Incident or Terrorism Activity	Number of Migrants Displaced	Main Affected Areas	Ethnic or Religious Background of Migrants	Impact on Local Identity and Culture
1983-1990	ULFA insurgency, ethnic violence	300,000+	Lower Assam, Barak Valley	Muslim and Hindu migrants from Bangladesh	Fears of demographic change, political polarization
1996	NDFB insurgency and attacks in Bodo areas	50,000+	Bodoland region	Bodo ethnic group, Hindu refugees from Bangladesh	Increased ethnic tension, rise in separatist sentiment
2000-2003	Attacks by ULFA, NDFB, and insurgents	100,000+	Assam-Bangladesh border	Various ethnic groups, predominantly Bengali Hindus	Resettlement of displaced persons, increasing inter-community tensions
2008	ULFA bombings and ethnic clashes	40,000+	Dispur, Guwahati Dhubri	Mostly Assamese Muslims, Hindus, Bengali migrants	Growing animosity towards migrants, demand for NRC
2017-2024	Ongoing insurgent activity in Assam	20,000+	Lower Assam, Barak Valley	Rohingya Muslims, Bengali Hindus	Tensions around identity politics, debates over CAB

**Table 4: Terrorism-Related Migration Data in Assam (1980s-present)**

Some of the key terrorism related migration incidents in Assam in the 1980's to the present are listed in the table above or (Table 4) below and note the number of displaced people, the areas affected and the impact on local identity and culture. Terrorism and insurgency has continued to increase migration and has shaped the socio political landscape of Assam.

## 7. CONCLUSION

### Summary of Key Findings

In this study the complex intersection of identity, migration and cultural hybridity in the border zone of India – Bangladesh – Myanmar border region has been explored. However, the cultural hybridity of local population in these areas is due to highly developed migration patterns, responsible for migration

when granted with historical division, current conflicts and neighboring terrorisms. The study of border literature has been crucial for the interpretation of migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar, the ‘displaced,’ and for understanding how they negotiate their ‘ethnicities’ within the corrosivity and suffering of forced displacement. On the borderlands, when the lines between national and cultural identity are fluid and contested, literature and narratives from the region offer insights in the emotional and cultural dimensions identity formation.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) has deeply affected, it is revealed, the regional geopolitics of Assam, especially. Their efforts to expand citizenship — such as the CAB, which would grant citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan — have fanned storms over migration, identity and religious belonging. Proponents say it is a way to help persecuted minorities, but critics see it as targeting and trying to disperse a region’s demographic makeup, as in Assam. The implementation of this legislation has met with ethnic and political resistance, which has resulted in the protests and the challenges to its implementation making an already complex identity politics more complicated.

### **Future Research Directions**

There is much more that might be researched in the future. The second is a call for further research in the study of cross border migration in the South Asian geo politics, in the context of migrant flows and their socio political implications. Other research focuses on learning about how migration caused by cross-border violence and terrorism affects local cultures, societies and policies in both the host and source country. An additional avenue for additional exploration could be to see how this formation of identity is shaped according to geopolitical tensions or migratory pressures in other border regions such as Afghanistan-Pakistan or Kashmir and Nepal-India, where a synergistic migration and cultural hybridization has been taking place. The interface between literature, politics and identity on borders is an important area of further study. Exploring how literary narratives from regions of conflict at borders, such as the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar or the insurgency in Assam, embody and condense political discourse can help us to understand how cultural texts work in shaping national identity and the view of migrants and refugees. It allowed for scholars to look at how border literatures can provide a useful aid in addressing humanitarian issues while also encouraging regional peace.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Based on the findings, several policy recommendations can be made for addressing the challenges of migration, citizenship, and regional security in the context of the India- Bangladesh-Myanmar border:

1. Inclusive Migration Policies: Regardless of the religious or ethnic background, migrants and refugees must be given their rights and human dignity as a matter of priority and every government must adopt inclusive migration policies. It covers humane conditions in refugee camps and opportunities for legal status for the sellers of conflict in hopes and persecution.

2. Reform of Citizenship Laws: The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) should be evaluated once more before handing it over to deepen ethnic divisions. On this regard, policymakers can frame this as creating a more inclusive framework that discriminates by religion, protecting effectively all marginalised communities irrespective of their religion.
3. Cross-Border Cooperation on Security: Coming down hard on the terrorism issue from the cross border can only be done with increased regional cooperation between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The region will be less violent and unstable if there are collaborative efforts to fight terrorist groups, regulate arms trafficking and monitor migratory routes.
4. Regional Dialogue for Identity and Integration: Reducing tensions, and thus increasing social harmony, would result in more dialogues of regional character based on the integration of migrants and the preservation of cultural identities. That could include cultural exchange programs, peace building, and the creating and nurturing of public discourse around identity and migration in the borderlands.
5. Humanitarian Aid and International Support: In collaboration with international organizations: Countries in the region should support humanitarian aid to refugees and displaced populations, meeting basic needs such as healthcare, education and livelihoods. International support should also be directed at eliminating the underlying reasons for migration as embodied of political repression and economic deprivation.

Addressing these core areas will enable governments and policymakers to move towards a more stable and inclusive one, which establishes a balance between the rights of migrants and the host communities and the human rights and promotes regional stability.

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